

Social Security

Your Number
And Card



What's In This Leaflet?

This leaflet contains information that will help you:

- get a Social Security number and card;
- understand your number and card;
- apply for a duplicate card;
- change your name on your Social Security card; and
- protect your Social Security number and card.

How Do I Get A Number And Card?

If you or your parents didn't get a Social Security number and card for you previously, you'll need to contact us. To get an original card, you'll need to complete an application and provide documents that show your age, identity and citizenship or lawful alien status.

Call your local Social Security office or our toll-free number—**1-800-772-1213**—before you visit the office. Tell them what documentation you have. That way you won't have to make a second trip.

Remember, there is no charge to get a Social Security card. This service is **FREE**.

What Does My Number Mean?

The nine-digit Social Security number is divided into three parts—

The first three digits are the area numbers. These digits originally indicated the state where you applied for your first card.

Now it is derived from the ZIP code in the mailing address on your application for a card.

The middle two digits are the group numbers. They have no special geographic or data significance but merely serve to break the number into conveniently sized blocks for orderly issuance.

The last four digits are the serial numbers. They represent a straight numerical sequence of numbers within the group.

Types Of Cards

We issue three types of Social Security cards.

The card most people have shows only your name and Social Security number and lets you work without restriction. We issue it to U.S. citizens and people lawfully admitted to the U.S. with permanent Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) work authorization.

The second card bears the legend, **“NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT.”** We issue it to people from other countries lawfully admitted to the U.S. without work authorization from the INS who need a number because of a federal law requiring a Social Security number to get a benefit or service.

The third type of card bears the legend, **“VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH INS AUTHORIZATION.”** We issue it to people lawfully admitted to the U.S. on a temporary basis with INS authorization to work.

How Do I Replace My Card?

If you need a duplicate card because yours was lost or stolen or a corrected card because you have changed your name, call or visit your local Social Security office. You'll need to complete an application and show one or more documents as identification. Your duplicate card will have your same name and number as your previous card.

To change your name on your card, you need to show one or more documents that identify you by your old name and your new name. Your corrected card will have your new name and the same number as your previous card.

Again, this service is **FREE**.

Privacy Of Records

We can't prevent others from asking for your number. And we can't control what uses are made of your number once you give it to someone else.

However, you should know that giving it to them does not give them access to your Social Security records. The privacy of your records is guaranteed unless:

- disclosure to another government agency is required by law; or
- the information is needed to conduct Social Security or other government health or welfare programs.

Should I Give My Number To Others?

If a business or other enterprise asks you for your Social Security number, you can refuse to give it to them. However, that may mean doing without the purchase or service for which your number was requested. For example, utility companies and other services ask for a Social Security number, but do not need it; they can do a credit check or identify the person in their records by alternative means.

Giving your number is voluntary, even when you are asked for the number directly. If requested, you should ask why your number is needed, how your number will be used, what law requires you to give your number and what the consequences are if you refuse. The answers to these questions can help you decide if you want to give your Social Security number. The decision is yours.

Our primary message is this—be careful with your Social Security number and your card to prevent their misuse.

If you think someone is misusing your number, contact us and ask for the fact-sheet, **When Someone Misuses Your Number** (Publication No. 05-10064).

How Can I Protect My Number And My Records?

Your Social Security number is used to keep a record of your earnings. Here are some things you can do to protect your earnings record and to make sure it is accurate.

- Show your Social Security card to your employer when you start a job.
- Check your name and Social Security number on your pay stub and W-2 form to make sure they are correct.
- Keep your card in a safe place. When it is necessary to give your number to your employer, show the card rather than rely on your memory.
- Notify Social Security every time you change your name.

For More Information

You can get more information by calling Social Security's toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**. You can call for an appointment or speak to a service representative between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days. Our lines are busiest early in the week and early in the month, so, if your business can wait, it's best to call at other times. Whenever you call, have your Social Security number handy.

If you have a touch-tone phone, recorded information and services are available 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing may call our toll-free TTY number, 1-800-325-0778, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days.

Social Security publications are available to users of the Internet. Type www.ssa.gov to access **Social Security Online**.

We treat all calls confidentially—whether they're made to our toll-free numbers or to

one of our local offices. We also want to make sure that you receive accurate and courteous service. That's why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some incoming and outgoing telephone calls.

Social Security Administration
SSA Publication No. 05-10002
April 1999
ICN



Printed on recycled paper